



BURUNDI

TRAVEL PACKET



INTRODUCTION

Dear Family,

All God's Children International is pleased to assist you with travel arrangements for the adoption of your child(ren) from Burundi! We ask that you thoroughly read this entire packet as each section is designed to give you a better idea of what to expect and how to plan for your trip.

Even though this packet mainly focuses on what to take to Burundi and how to make plans for your trip, we also want to make sure that you are preparing your mindset for this trip.

Burundi is a wonderful country, and the people are welcoming and honored to have you visit. You will encounter very different, and sometimes challenging, conditions in Burundi. Keep in mind that even if certain aspects of travel in Burundi are difficult, you are in a different culture, so you'll need to be flexible and aware of those differences.

We pray that you will be greatly blessed as you begin this step of your adoption process. May your trip to Burundi be a memorable and wonderful experience!

Blessings,

AGCI Adoption Team

**"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my
hope comes from Him." Psalm 62:5**

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Document
templates and
examples are
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family portal.

Please be sure to keep a copy of all documents for your own records.



1. PREPARING TO TRAVEL



**"Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord."**

PSALM 31:24

1. Preparing to Travel

SECTION CHECKLIST

- Airline Reservations
- Accommodations
- Visas
- Vaccinations
- STEP Registration

Airline Reservations

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. **Please consult with a travel agent to find the best tickets.** Some families have found round trip tickets from the USA to Nairobi and just purchased one ways from Nairobi to Bujumbura. Please consult with your travel agent to find the best prices and itinerary. Sometimes the best prices does not mean a good itinerary.
 - U.S. to Bujumbura
 - Bujumbura to Nairobi
 - Nairobi to U.S.
2. **Book a return ticket for your child.** Your child(ren)'s passport will have their Burundian name. We have found that parents who adopt a child who is mobile benefit greatly from purchasing an extra seat for their child. You will be required to purchase a seat for any children over 2 years old.
3. **Choosing a travel agent is an individual choice.** We can only provide information to start you on your search by listing those agencies most commonly used by families and found to offer good fares. AGCI cannot guarantee that the agency we recommend offers the lowest prices.
4. **If you do not want to use a travel agent, you may also try calling the airlines directly;** however, we have been told by many families that purchasing tickets from agents who offer wholesale or bulk seat pricing is better. Some airlines advertise "adoption rates." Please feel free to check this out; however, most families have found that the adoption rate is calculated by taking the full fare price and cutting it in half.
5. **If you intend to use frequent flier miles,** you need to understand that your flight options may be limited. If you are unable to use your frequent flier miles for the dates that we give you, you may either choose to purchase tickets and keep the schedule, or be rescheduled out several weeks to the next available travel space that coincides with your frequent flier miles.

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7. **You must purchase flexible tickets that can be changed at the last minute.** Due to visa issues and travel delays, you'll need to buy a ticket that can be canceled or changed. Please do not buy non-refundable tickets.

SUGGESTED AGENCY:

Adoption Airfare LLC

www.adoptionairfare.com

1673 Independence Ridge

Breeding, KY 42715

Office: 800-277-7651

WHAT YOU NEED TO ASK:

When booking tickets, please keep in mind the following questions so that you are fully informed about airline policy and your own travel circumstances:

1. **How many people are flying to and from Burundi?** On your trip you will need to buy more seats when coming back since you will have additional children.
2. **What costs are incurred if we change our tickets (even if they are for adoption)?** How many days in advance must we notify our airline before any penalty is incurred?*Your family may want to consider booking a changeable or open ended ticket.
3. **Are there any discounts for adoption?** If so, what are the discounted prices based upon (full fare)?
4. **What is the phone number to call if we must change our tickets?**
5. **Do we have any frequent flier miles or other travel benefit** we may use on the domestic or international leg of the trip? If you do choose to use frequent flier miles, this could limit your choices of flights but is definitely a benefit worth looking into.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID:

It is important to not book your tickets until you are given a specific travel date by AGCI. In the past, families have booked tickets without their travel date and have lost a considerable amount of money when they learn that they cannot leave on the day they had scheduled. Although the urge to purchase your tickets will be very strong or your travel agent may be pushing you to commit, please do not book your tickets until we have confirmed your exact date.

Once you have booked your tickets, we ask that you please forward your family itinerary to AGCI. Our staff in Burundi uses this form to make all arrangements for you including airport pick-ups, reservations, etc.

Accommodations

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

You can now book your own hotel in Burundi using www.hotels.com. Most families prefer this as you get instant confirmation and you are able to use your credit card. Please only book at approved hotels listed in this travel packet. Otherwise, families are responsible to book their hotels while in Nairobi. It is likely that your hotel in Nairobi will take credit cards. If you run into any problems or difficulties with any aspect of your accommodations or service while in Burundi, please tell Pierre or the hotel staff immediately.

In Burundi, you have two options for your stay, please see the listed hotels below.

BURUNDI HOTEL OPTIONS:

Best Outlook Hotel

<http://best-outlook-bujumbura.h-rez.com/mobile.htm?language=en¤cy=BIF>

Club Du Lac (Recommended) <http://cms.hotelclubdulac.com/>

NAIROBI HOTEL OPTIONS:

Tribe Hotel

<http://www.tribe-hotel.com/>

Heart Lodge Guest House (recommended) <http://www.africaheartlodge.com/>

Bidwood Suite Hotel La Maison Royale

Depending on if you are travelling with a group or alone you may be able to select a different hotel. If you identify a different hotel you want to stay in it will need to be approved by the foreign staff.

www.booking.com/nairobi

Visas

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. You should begin applying for your visa once your court decree is received. Instructions for applying for your visas can be found on your portal. Your AGCI Adoption Team can also email it to you.
2. You will need to apply for a travel visa for both Burundi and Kenya. The Burundi visa is good for 30 days. This 30 days has to include your entry and departure dates. The Kenya visa is good for 6 months.
3. AGCI recommends that you use Caring Hands (<http://www.caring-hands-services.com/>) as your courier service to obtain your visas. Any questions or further clarification on instructions please contact Colleen at Caring Hands directly.

Caring Hands Services, Inc.
430 M Street, SW, #N106
Washington, DC 20024

Phone: (202) 554-2277

Email: crooney@caring-hands-services.com

Vaccinations

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. There are immunization requirements for travel to Burundi.
2. You should be up to date on all your vaccinations and will be required to have a Yellow Fever shot.
3. Please consult your local travel clinic or doctor for further vaccinations that are necessary.
4. Please consult with the website, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the most up-to-date health information for Burundi!
https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/children/burundi?s_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-single-OOI
5. Please check the US State Department Travel website for the most up-to-date Security alerts for Burundi here: [https:// travel.state.gov/content/travel.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html)

STEP Registration

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Our USA Department of State offers an easy, free, online way to notify our Department of State when USA families travel to international locations. This is absolutely the best way for the USA Embassy in Bujumbura and in Nairobi to know your whereabouts when you are in country. Therefore, please register each traveler on this STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program) and fill in your contact information when you are traveling. Please notify your AGCI Adoption Team when you have done so. <https://step.state.gov/step/>



2. TRAVEL TIPS



**"Guide me in Your truth and
teach me, for You are God my
Savior, and my hope is in You
all day long." Psalm 25:5**

2. TRAVEL TIPS

SECTION CHECKLIST

- Understanding the Basics
- What to Pack
- Money
- Gifts and Donation Ideas
- Activities in Bujumbura

Understanding the Basics

THINGS TO REMEMBER IN BURUNDI:

- The phrase “Assume nothing” will keep you vigilant and your sense of humor intact.
- Only eat food that has been peeled or cooked.
- You are in a foreign country with foreign rules.
- Be street smart and keep your eyes wide open while walking around.
- Burundian drivers follow a different set of rules and they will not yield to pedestrians.
- Do not drink water from the tap, use bottled water for everything including brushing your teeth.
- Be considerate and realize that AGCI staff are very busy working to complete your adoption; therefore, they will not always know that you need to go shopping for food, or any other items, unless you communicate this need.
- Avoid traveling at night.
- The shelter personnel are professionals, and it is their job to enforce shelter policy. It is also part of their job and responsibility to observe you with your child(ren), since they too wish only the best for that child.
- Don't be afraid to speak up! The only way a problem or concern of yours can be fixed is to tell AGCI staff. They are there to help you through every step, including unforeseen problems that may occur along the way.
- Do not offer to pay for meals or drinks if you are meeting with any Burundians, this can be misconstrued as a bribe. AGCI staff are an exception to this.
- It is not unusual to have someone approach you on the street and ask for money. It is strongly recommended that you don't engage these people and never give money.
- Remember you are not going on a vacation or tour; you are going to your child(ren)'s birth country to complete your adoption.

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- Since your trip is not a vacation or tour, entertainment is not provided for the “down time” in the guest house. Please bring books, games, cards, toys and other forms of entertainment for you and your children.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ADDITIONAL TRAVELERS:

In the best interest of children we serve, AGCI requires that only adoptive parents travel on the trip to Burundi. On your trip, the fragile beginning stages of attachment are taking place and are best formed when only the adoptive parents are interacting with the child. In addition, it is important that the family have limited distractions while in-country in order to navigate their adoption process. The child’s transition into the care of their adoptive parents involves immense loss and confusion as they separate from all relational and environmental attachments, most often resulting in extreme behaviors and vulnerability. This challenging transition requires the full support and undivided attention of the adoptive parents and should be done without any other family members or friends present. For all of these reasons we require that only the adoptive parents make the trip to Burundi to pick up their child.

What to Pack

Undoubtedly, you will find packing for Burundi a real challenge. There are many items to remember, including toys and clothes for your child(ren), numerous medicines for ailments that you may or may not get, and your own clothing and travel items. You will probably have to pack and repack several times before getting everything to fit. We advise that you carry anything valuable in your carry-on luggage. It is also wise to spread your clothes and your child(ren)’s around in different suitcases, in case of loss or theft of a piece or pieces of luggage. To make it easier, please refer to the list below.

CLOTHES:

It is important to show respect by dressing nicely while in Burundi. We recommend dressing in layers and prepare for rain. Sandals are fine but close-toed shoes are best. Bring flip flops for the showers. Please include business-casual clothes for meetings with government officials, the US embassy, and if you attend any social event or gathering. Clothes should not be revealing or skimpy. Women should wear modest dresses/skirts/pants/capri pants. Sleeveless shirts and dresses are allowed in Nairobi. Please cover any tattoos.

GENERAL TRAVELING ESSENTIALS:

- Water bottle: You will use this to fill up water from jugs that are purchased.
It is important that you do not drink or use any tap water.
- Backpack
- Ziploc bags
- Hand sanitizer

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- Wet Wipes
 - Toiletries
 - Flashlight
 - Photo book of your family
 - Extra glasses, contact lenses and solution
 - Notebook, journal and pens to record “firsts” for your child(ren)
 - Camera/Video camera (bring all camera accessories, including memory cards, film and batteries)

ESSENTIAL ITEMS FOR YOUR CHILD(REN):

- Toys (puzzles, Legos, play dough, coloring books, crayons, etc.)
- Snacks
- Formula, baby food (may be purchased in Burundi)
- Bottles, pacifiers, bibs
- Medicine (see next page)
- Clothes (see next page)

CLOTHES/SHOES FOR YOUR CHILD(REN):

You will be responsible to dress your child(ren) from the time you first bring your child(ren) back to the hotel. This means you will want to have extra changes of clothing for your child(ren). You may want to pack a few pull-ups for older children, just in case. After you pack, you may want to fill all the space in your suitcases with little toys to entertain your child(ren) during long waits, such as at the U.S. Embassy visa appointment. If you are adopting an older child, you might want to flatten out a small empty backpack in your luggage. Before traveling with your child(ren) back home, you can fill the backpack with toys for the trip home.

HEALTH AIDS (OPTIONAL):

If you have any health issues, be sure to bring any medication that you may need in your carry-on (if it is not a liquid).

- Imodium AD
- Mosquito Repellent
- Cipro (prescription required)
- Malaria medication (prescription required)
- Bug spray
- Tums
- Pain reliever (Advil, Tylenol, Excedrin, etc.)

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- First-aid kit
 - Dramamine
 - Over-the-counter antibiotic ointment, such as Polysporin

FOOD (OPTIONAL):

- Crackers
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruits, nuts
- Granola bars
- Candy, cookies
- Jerky

Money

You will find that you are going to carry a large amount of money to Africa with you. This is going to cover your living and travel expenses, as well as adoption expenses and anything extra. The only exception to this would be if you paid for your hotel via a website. Another option is to book three, one way tickets.

MONEY EXCHANGE:

AGCI staff will assist you with exchanging money once you arrive in Bujumbura. It is advised that you exchange money in small increments because it is difficult to exchange it back to US dollar once you return home. Credit cards are not used in Burundi. Please prepare to pay for everything with Burundi currency. In Kenya you will find credit cards are accepted in larger hotels and restaurants.

PROTECTING YOUR ASSETS:

- Do not tip in Burundi.
- As in every city, there are pickpockets. Carry your cash, credit cards and passport in a money belt, neck wallet or similar.
- As previously mentioned, do not give money if you are approached on the street.
- Do not provide any donations directly to any persons, shelters, or entities.

ACTUAL BILLS:

It is easiest if you carry most of your money in \$100 bills, though it is helpful to have some smaller denominations as well. Call your bank at least a week before your departure to ensure that they will have enough money for you. The bills must NOT be older than 2006, the newer the bills, the better.

Note: Please request "clean" bills with little to no rips, or markings on them.

Gift and Donation Ideas

GIFTS:

It is customary to give a small gift or tip to show your appreciation when someone has been helpful to you.

Families are encouraged to bring gifts of little monetary value for the following people:

- Pierre (AGCI's Lawyer)
- Gifts for the shelter director are not recommended. Instead prepare to bring some donation items for the shelter.

DONATIONS FOR THE SHELTER (OPTIONAL):

Donations are always welcome. The below listed items are always needed and can be quite expensive to purchase in Burundi. Below are some suggestions of items that are always needed. Be sure to discuss these donations with Pierre before giving them to the shelter. He will be sure that it is done in the appropriate way at the appropriate time.

- Children's vitamins
- Inflatable toys
- School supplies (pens, markers, coloring books, etc.)
- Children's Tylenol
- New or gently used shoes
- Soccer balls
- Bubbles
- Chalk
- Soap and shampoo
- Lotion
- Families can bring cash to purchase donations in Burundi, you are welcome to do that but we strongly recommend NOT giving any cash directly to the shelter director or staff. You are encouraged to give in-kind donations.

Activities in Bujumbura

RESTAURANTS AND ACTIVITIES:

- AGCI staff will be with you in Bujumbura and can help you know what restaurants and activities there are in Bujumbura.



3. YOUR TRIP



**"Come near to God and He
will come near to you."**

James 4:8

3. TRIP DETAILS

SECTION CHECKLIST

- Required Documents
- Itinerary
- Meeting Your Child
- First Days With Your Child In Country
- Travel Expenses

Required Documents

PAPERWORK REQUIRED FOR YOU TO PREPARE AND TAKE WITH YOU:

- Printed email of visa interview confirmation
- Confirmation of embassy medical clinic appointment
- French and English Birth Certificates (you'll receive these in Burundi)
- French and English Adoption Decree, No Objections Letter, and Certificate of Conformity
- Signed and notarized Vaccination Waiver
- Copy of the National Visa Center Letter
- 2 passport photos of your child (you will get these while in Nairobi)
- Copies of each of your passports
- Passports

Itinerary

DAY 1-2: TRAVEL DAYS, USA TO BUJUMBURA (FRIDAY/SATURDAY)

Ideally your travel begins departing the USA on a Friday so you will arrive Saturday in Bujumbura. When you arrive in Burundi, you will be met by AGCI staff at the airport. They will be waiting just outside the airport exit holding a sign that says your first and last name. They will take you directly to the hotel.

DAY 3: REST DAY IN BUJUMBURA (SUNDAY, OPTIONAL, BUT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

Ideally you will take Sunday to rest in Bujumbura before you pick up your child on Monday! This day is to get over jet lag, change money, get orientated to Bujumbura and rest so you can be at your best and prepared for one of the most memorable and exciting day of your life!

DAY 4: VISIT THE SHELTER, PICK YOUR CHILD UP (Monday)

You will go to the shelter and be introduced to your child(ren), they will remain with you from this point forward. During this time at the shelter you will have an opportunity to talk with the shelter director and absorb as much as possible of your child(ren)'s home. It is possible that the shelter may organize a party for your child to say goodbye. You will need to pay Pierre for this party and donate funds. Take pictures of their caretakers, friends, their room and bed. This will likely be the last time the child(ren) will be at shelter or see any of these people.

DAYS 5-8: TIME IN BUJUMBURA AND MEETING WITH CENTRAL AUTHORITY (TUESDAY – FRIDAY)

You have a 5 day visit in Bujumbura which is now required by the Ministry of Solidarity. On one of these days you will go and meet with the director of the Central Authority, this will be an opportunity for you to express your gratitude for their involvement in the adoption. You will also be able to communicate your desire and commitment to continue to honor Burundi culture and customs in your family. Here you will receive all of your child(ren)'s official documents.

On the other days you can swim in your hotel pool and sightsee around Bujumbura. You can arrange day time trips around the city with the hotel (do not travel outside of your hotel at night). You will see Pierre or at least be in contact with him via phone during these days in Bujumbura. Families can get restless during this time so bring games, books, electronic devices and pool toys.

Please embrace this special bonding time in Burundi and take the opportunity to shop for souvenirs, talk to locals and absorb as much of the special culture in Burundi as possible.

DAY 9 OR DAY 10: TRAVEL TO NAIROBI: (SATURDAY/SUNDAY)

You can depart for Nairobi, Kenya on either Saturday or Sunday as it is a short easy flight from Bujumbura to Nairobi. Upon arriving in Kenya you will be met by your driver/guide, Frederick. He will take you to your hotel. Pierre arranges Frederick's time with you.

DAY 11: MEDICAL EXAM at IOM Clinic (MONDAY)

Your first 3 days in Nairobi are spent completing your child(ren)'s medical exam at the US Embassy designated clinic, the IOM clinic. This appointment will be arranged by your AGCI Adoption Team on your behalf. This IOM Medical appointment will only allow one of you to attend if you have a single child. If you have multiple children we may be able to ask for clearance for both parents to enter the facility. During this visit your child(ren) will TB tested and have any required vaccinations.

This clinic is large, boisterous and has long waits. Please bring a backpack for each child with snacks, coloring books, or age appropriate toys as the wait times can be upwards of 4-5 hours with not a lot of clear directions. Do not be afraid to ask IOM staff where you should go for your next appointment if you have been waiting a long time. You will be issued a payment coupon during this first visit. Frederick will drive you to a local mall where you will pay and you'll bring the receipt back to the IOM clinic.

DAY 12: REST DAY IN NAIROBI (TUESDAY)

You will need to wait about 36-48 hours for your TB test to be read and awaiting for all the results to be sent to the USA Embassy for review. After your appointment, the Nairobi Embassy will be communicating with the Bujumbura Embassy and the Central Authority to ensure that all the appropriate approves and documents are in place for your child(ren)'s visa. Once the Embassy issues your child(ren)'s visa, you can come home.

We anticipate that there will be a lot of down time while you are waiting for the visa process to be complete in Nairobi. Please be prepared to entertain your child(ren) while in the hotel room. You will be able to go out and explore the area but keep in mind that you will want to be thoughtful about the comfort level of your child(ren). Based on how they are adjusting and attaching to you it may be best to plan to stay in a quiet controlled environment.

DAY 13: VISIT TO THE IOM CLINIC AGAIN (WEDNESDAY)

On this second IOM clinic visit you will go there for your TB test to be read. This visit should be a shorter wait time than the first visit, but please be prepared for an extended wait by bringing toys and snacks.

DAY 14: US EMBASSY VISA APPOINTMENT (THURSDAY)

At the US Embassy you will not be allowed to bring any cameras, phones, laptops or other electrical equipment with you. Please don't bring any luggage or extra bags. Be sure that you have all your documents (including your own USA Passports) and bring some toys and snacks to entertain your child as you wait. This appointment could take one to six hours. After this appointment you are just waiting to receive your child's visa. You will meet with one of the US Consular staff in a short interview lasting about 5 minutes to approve the visa.

DAY 15: ISSUING USA VISA (FRIDAY)

You will need to wait in Nairobi for the US Embassy to issue your child(ren)'s visa in their East African Passport. This passport will be issued in the child's birth name. You can go get your child's passport with the visa in it typically Friday morning as the US Embassy closes at noon on Fridays.

DAY 16-17: TRAVEL FROM NAIROBI TO USA (SATURDAY - SUNDAY)

You can plan to fly out from Nairobi to the USA either late Friday evening or Saturday morning.

Your flight home may be challenging as your child has not experienced these many new sights, sounds and smells. Please be prepared in your carry on with plenty of snacks, toys and extra change of clothes (for all of you). Please make sure you put all documents for adoption in your carry on as you will need to present them to US Customs and Immigration before you have a chance to get anything you put in your checked luggage. At your first point of entry in the USA, you will meet with an immigration official and you will hand over your sealed packet of documents. Sometimes you will be able to present these at the immigration desk, often times families are escorted into a separate room for document review.

Please be assured that you have everything you need to clear US Customs and immigration.

Congratulations! At this first USA point of entry is when your child becomes a USA Citizen!

Meeting Your Child

Many parents have high expectations of this meeting, and it is important for you to be realistic and patient with yourselves and your child. This will be an emotional and overwhelming time for you as parents. Please remember to take time and allow your child to warm up to you. Below are a few suggestions that you may want to consider:

- **Bring toys and snacks for your child.** You may want to pick one special item for your child, such as a stuffed animal or a blanket, and embroider his/her name on it. If you bring more than one toy, realize that it may become community property once you leave the shelter. If you plan to bring snacks for your child, please be sensitive to other children. You may want to bring enough to share.
- **Bring a photo album of your family.** If your child is old enough, you may want to bring pictures from home to share with your child. It will be a great icebreaker to look at pictures and interact with your child. Plan to leave the album with the shelter for your child to look at until you return for your second trip. You may or may not get the album back, so please make sure that the photos you choose are copies.
- **Do not be afraid to hug, kiss, and show affection to your child.** Take this opportunity to show your love in a tangible way, once your child has warmed up to you.
- **Remember that many children have had little to no contact with men.** This can affect children in different ways. Sometimes children will gravitate towards the father because they look at their new mom like a caregiving nurse. Other times children are afraid of the father and will only warm up initially to the mother. Whatever the case is with your child, please realize that this is a normal response, and that once your child is home, they will learn what it is like to be a family and have a mom and a dad.

- **For older children:** Bring toys to play with your kids (stickers, coloring, tattoos, instruments, Nerf balls, etc.)
- **Please feel free to call the office and speak with AGCI staff** about any questions or concerns that you may have about this first exciting meeting with your child.

First Days with Your Child In-Country

It is common for parents to experience a great deal of anxiety when finally left alone with their child in the hotel or apartment. It is usually a great comfort to be with your coordinator who can translate and help both parent(s) and child to understand one another. Be patient with yourselves and be patient with your child. Above all, be prepared for anything.

Please read the "Adjustment Period" section of this packet, and also feel free to consult with your program director if you are feeling overwhelmed.

Depending on how much Kirundi or French you have learned, you may find communication with toddlers and older children difficult, but be creative—charades works wonderfully! Prepare a picture book before your trip with the basic essentials labeled, so you can point to things like brushing your teeth, the toilet, going to sleep, and eating food. Sometimes children adapt quickly to leaving the shelter, and other times it can be a struggle. Common behaviors can be rocking, banging their head, hitting themselves, tantrums, and biting. Often, children are afraid of taking a bath. To prepare for this, some families have brought swimming suits and gotten into the bathtub with their child and this has helped their child realize that a bath does not have to be scary and can actually be fun! They splash and play with toys and soon fears are gone. It is extremely important to not over-stimulate your child, while in Burundi, Kenya, and when first arriving home. Literally, everything is now a first for your child, and too many things at once will make your child anxious, and may exacerbate some of the behaviors listed above. Please do not plan on seeing every sight in town after you have your child.

Going a few places and seeing a few things is fine, but be sensitive to your child's reactions, and be prepared to spend time alone together in the hotel or apartment. If you want to do a great deal of sightseeing and shopping, it is a good idea to arrive to Burundi early, and also to plan any stops in other countries on your way to Burundi, and not on the way home with your child.

AGCI staff will schedule a call with you prior to your trips to prepare you for what is ahead.

Travel Expenses

The following table provides a list of the expenses you will incur on your trip to Burundi.

DESCRIPTION:	FEE (U.S. DOLLARS)
Airfare	
One way from US to Bujumbura	\$1,000 - \$2,000 per person
Flights to Nairobi	\$350 - \$500 per person
One way from Nairobi to US	\$1,000 - \$1,500 per person
Lodging	
Hotel (cash)	\$80 - \$100 a night, per person
Food	\$20-\$30 a day
Transportation	
Driver/Gas/Car	
During your time in Burundi	\$100
During your time in Nairobi	\$50 a day
Souvenirs/Gifts	\$100-\$200
Outings	\$200-\$400



4. CONTACT INFORMATION



**"...The Lord is trustworthy in all He
promises and faithful in all He does."**

Psalm 145:13

4. IMPORTANT CONTACT INFO

Communication

The most common way to communicate while you are in Burundi and Kenya is to use the chat app WhatsApp. This can be downloaded to most smartphones, and then you can add contacts. Your AGCI Adoption Team will create a chat group including you, AGCI staff in Burundi and staff in the US.

Please check with your carrier that you will have a data plan and can use WhatsApp when you are traveling.

Pierre	Burundi Attorney	257-79-912-905	pierrenoelnibigira@gmail.com
Frederick	Guide/Driver	Varies	254-727-422-664
			Please see accommodations

Hotel

Note: Be sure that you travel with the full name, address, and phone number of each hotel that you are staying in.

The US Embassy in Bujumbura	257-22-20-70-00
The US Embassy in Nairobi	254-20-363-6000

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER'S INFORMATION:

When calling outside to the U.S., first dial 001 and then the U.S. area code and number.

When calling to Burundi, dial 011 and then the country code of 509.



5. THE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD



**"For great is His love toward us, and
the faithfulness of the Lord endures
forever. Praise the Lord."
Psalm 117:2**

5. THE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

SECTION CHECKLIST

- Bonding and Attachment
- Establish a Schedule
- Behaviors to Expect from Your Child
- Keep AGCI Informed

Bonding and Attachment

This is an exciting and wonderful time as your new family begins! There are some things that parents need to keep in mind in these first few days, weeks, and months. It is important that expectations are kept realistic and that your new family is allowed time to form as you get to know each other. The two key books to have read in preparation of this time are, *Raising Adopted Children* and *20 Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*. If it has been a while since you read the book, please reread the chapters on adjustment. (Chapter 2 "Adjustment of the Family" in *Raising Adopted Children* contains particularly good information.) Keep in mind that bonding is not immediate; it will take time. Children often experience a period of disequilibrium. This is very normal and a lot of parenting is guesswork at how to help your child cope with all of the changes that he/she is experiencing. The two most important building blocks to bonding are safety and security. Your child will be exploring the new environment and testing you as he/she learns to trust.

COCOONING:

It is important to explain to family and friends before you travel that they may see you at the airport to welcome you home, but that you do not plan on having or attending any large parties or get-togethers for at least a month. Your child needs time alone with your immediate nuclear family to begin the bonding process. Going to busy public places and interacting with many other adults and children will only slow the bonding process. Your child needs to understand that you are his/her parents and also learn what a family really is.

"Cocooning" with your child for 90 days or more is often very helpful in forming a good initial bond and attachment. The child needs to have time to explore the new home environment and to get to know you and any other siblings in the home. I would recommend that you limit the amount of time that family members and friends spend with your child. Treat him/ her like a hospital patient at first and limit visits to five to ten minutes. Going to McDonald's for a Happy Meal may seem like a good idea; however, I would suggest that you avoid those activities (maybe even going to church for awhile) until your child has settled into a comfortable routine. To avoid indiscriminate affection and to help your child bond with you, I would also

recommend that you don't let others (except for grandparents) pick up and hold your child. As much as possible, I would also suggest those visits occur in your own home.

Many times families with babies under 12 months do not feel that cocooning is as necessary due to the age. However, please keep in mind even with birthing a baby, mothers cocoon those first weeks at home. God designed the birthing process for mothers to recuperate, and therefore stay close to home, those first weeks out of the hospital. The same process is crucial for the adoptive family to make the proper bonds with their child.

BABY BLUES:

It is of great importance to prepare yourself for the possibility that you might not bond or attach to your child immediately upon receiving him/her. Even though you have bonded to your child through your visits to Burundi and the pictures and videos over the last months, actually feeding, changing, and incorporating your child into your daily life and routine might not be what you imagined. Some families have experienced severe "baby blues" upon bringing their child home. They have felt like a "caretaker" and not the mother that they imagined. Getting used to the baby's smells, personality, and spirit may take more time for some than others.

Please note, that even when birthing a child, many mothers have experienced these same issues. Bonding and attaching to a child, whether through birth or adoption, can take many months. The amount of love you have the first time you see your child's face and hold their little body will be tripled three months later. Every day spent with your child deepens this bond and attachment. Remember, you are not a bad parent, no matter how you may feel at any given moment. Time, patience, prayer, and rest will do wonders for you once you are home, safe and sound with your child. Give yourself a break and remember that you have been in a foreign country, with different foods, different time zones, and you are jet lagged, not to mention emotionally spent with the thrill of finally having your child in your arms!

Please keep in mind that bonding is not immediate; it will take time. Children often experience a period of dis-equilibrium. This is very normal, and a lot of parenting is guesswork trying to figure out how to best help your child, as well as yourself, cope with all of the changes that you are experiencing. It is also normal for children to experience anxiety when they hear a change in language. Even younger infants can be accustomed to hearing Kirundi and may be scared and cry because they do not recognize English or miss hearing Kirundi. The sound of different voices, smells, and lack of infant cries may be unsettling for them.

Below is a question and answer excerpted from the book *What to Expect the First Year*, by Arlene Eisenberg. You may want to check it out from the library and read the chapter on the adopted baby. There are several sections to help you understand some feelings you may be having once you get home.

NOT FEELING LIKE A PARENT:

“Not having gone through pregnancy and childbirth, holding a child born to someone else, I don’t feel much like a mother to our adopted son and I am afraid I never will.”

You don’t have to be an adoptive mother to have trouble adapting to the role of mother. Most first-time mothers experience the very same self-doubts as they hold their newborns. Becoming a mother does not begin with conception and culminate in the moments directly after birth; motherhood evolves over the course of days, weeks, months, and years of loving and caring. Though many women don’t feel like mothers during those first challenging days, virtually all do eventually.

Still, while you are struggling to reach that point you may, like many adoptive parents, wish that you could somehow erase the fact of the adoption. And then—presto! You would feel like a parent. But biological closeness doesn’t guarantee emotional closeness, and though as an adoptive parent you may have a hard time accepting yourself as a mother, your baby will have no such difficulty. You—who love, shelter, and provide for all this child’s needs—are the real thing to this baby boy or girl. And you’ll know that long before you hear that first “mama.”

Do keep in mind, however, that all babies are not created equally affectionate. Some tend not to be cuddly and don’t enjoy being touched a lot (see page 156), but this has nothing to do with what their parents do or don’t do. If you have such a baby, don’t blame yourself or the fact that your baby is adopted.

Establish a Schedule

In addition to working at bonding and attachment, there are several other factors that may have an effect on how well your child adapts to his/her new environment. The most common subjects mentioned are daily routine, sleeping patterns, and feeding habits. Choosing to approach these issues with your child in a healthy manner can greatly contribute to your child’s adaptation and sense of belonging in your family.

ROUTINE:

Most children thrive on routine and schedule. Request a written copy of your child’s daily routine and schedule from the shelter. It is important to stick as close to this schedule as possible for the first days with your child to provide a sense of normalcy. Maintaining this schedule will help with overall transition in becoming a part of your family. Once you are home and have had ample time with your child, you can then begin to make necessary adjustments to this routine as you both get accustomed to life together.

You may also want to limit the amount of toys given to your child in the beginning. First, your child will be more interested in exploring his/her new surroundings and bonding with you, than in playing with toys. Overwhelming your child with too many things at once can do more harm than good. You will want to have two to three toys that your child can learn to play with, and then introduce new things gradually; maybe then you can remove toys that seem less interesting to your child.

SLEEPING:

Many children experience irregular sleep habits due to the change in environment and the time change from Burundi to the U.S. It is sometimes a good idea to sleep with your child if he/she is experiencing difficulty with going to bed or is having night traumas. Your presence will be soothing, as well as help to provide a sense of security, assuring your child that you will be there for him/her whenever he/she needs you.

FEEDING:

Some parents encounter feeding issues with their child after they arrive home. This is due to the change in his/her diet from Burundian smells and tastes, to those they experience when they come to the U.S. At first, you may need to imitate the diet that your child is accustomed to in the shelter. Good choices include bland foods, such as yogurt, fruit, vegetables, pastas, breads, and potatoes. It is a good idea to gradually introduce new foods, so as to not overwhelm your child. Your child is also not used to eating a lot of meat, and will most likely not be interested in eating at McDonalds or Burger King. It is common for children to hoard food in the beginning and not be able to regulate food intake on their own. Some children will eat non-stop unless regulated.

Many children tend to have allergies to milk, so be sure to watch for abnormal reactions to dairy products. Some children may just not enjoy drinking milk, so you may want to try sweetening it with Ovaltine. Calcium and other vitamin supplements should be considered if dairy is not able to be a part of your child's diet. Another good alternative to use for protein intake, in addition to a regular diet, is the meal supplement drink, Ensure.

LANGUAGE:

Talk to your child a lot. Listening to you is how he/she will begin to learn English. Talking, talking, and more talking is the key to your child slowly recognizing what you are saying. Each child is different in how quickly they will feel comfortable in speaking. Your child will need to completely understand you before having enough confidence to speak himself/herself. If you are adopting more than one child, sometimes it takes a little longer for each child to speak English, because they have each other to lean on in speaking Kirundi; the need to speak English may not be as great as it would be for a child without a Kirundi-speaking sibling.

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY:

Be prepared that your child will be developmentally delayed. On the average, children are developmentally delayed one month for every three months they spend in an shelter. The delay may be more pronounced in certain areas of development and more age-appropriate in others. Typical areas of delay include fine motor skills, speech, and independent play. These are normal, typical behaviors to expect from children who have been under institutional care.

Behaviors to Expect from Your Child

In speaking with families over the last few years, we have compiled some important general information for families to be aware of when adopting children who have been institutionalized. These are general observations and they may or may not apply to your adoptive child.

It's important that you try to understand what your child is experiencing from your child's point of view:

1. The child has already experienced trauma in her life through abandonment. She experiences grief and loss, not only from being separated from biological parent(s), but also from the staff at one or more shelters, and/or a foster care family. While she may have received indifferent care from the staff, she nevertheless has formed a level of trust because her basic needs have been met.
2. The child is leaving a relatively "safe and secure" environment for the unknown. She is leaving that environment with "strangers." Who are you? Can she trust you? Will you meet her basic needs? Will you abandon her like others have done? Will you "give up" on her if she doesn't meet your expectations medically, social, physically, or developmentally? Will she have to do something to "earn" your love? Are you just some intermediary to some unknown destination over which she has no control? Can you love her unconditionally? Institutionalized children are intuitively aware that something is "broken" and they don't know how to fix it.
3. To protect themselves from any further hurt, trauma, and grief, older children develop a number of self-protecting and self-soothing mechanisms, which may include but are not limited to:
 - Thumb-sucking
 - Temper tantrums/long cries
 - Biting, scratching, kicking others
 - Interrupted sleep/night terrors
 - Focus on food/seemingly insatiable
 - Bed-wetting

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- Zoning out (staring off into space)
 - Clinginess

Note: Your child may develop these behaviors in order to have some "control" over a small area in her life when so much is totally out of her control. The more understanding you can be to your child's background and to what she may be feeling, the better her adjustment will be. Show your child in every way possible that you will never leave her, and that you will love her unconditionally, no matter what.

4. The adopted child has come from a sensory deprived institutional environment. She does not receive the type of neurological and physiological stimulation that should be the birthright of every child. Therefore, she is usually developmentally delayed in one or more of the following areas:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Expressive language
- Receptive language
- Social integration
- Sensory integration

Note: Be aware that many well-meaning family members, friends, and associates will not understand that your child is developmentally delayed. You may hear comments that suggest your child is not acting in an age-appropriate manner. Moreover, your child may need the assistance of a speech, occupational, or other professional therapist. It is not unusual for four- to six-year-olds not to be able to use crayons and scissors, or to know how to play with a toy.

5. Unfortunately, most adopted children from an institutionalized setting have received very little affection, including hugging, cuddling, and rocking. The child's lack of experiencing affection does not mean that she does not want it. However, she may find it difficult at first to receive your affection. It also may take some time for her to initiate gestures of affection toward you. It is not unusual for even an older child to be very uncomfortable with affectionate gestures. Just because she hasn't experienced it, doesn't mean she doesn't need it! You can't give your new child enough affection.

6. Overstimulation leads to a variety of "acting out" behaviors, including those mentioned earlier. Be aware that your child has come from a very under-stimulating environment. When your child leaves the institutional setting, she experiences what the adoption community calls the "Disneyland Affect." The child is bombarded with a whole new set of sensory experiences that can be very challenging for her to process. She needs space, time, and patience. If your child is acting out, a good question to always

ask yourself is, "Has our schedule or routine or anything else changed in the last 72 hours?" Often this is a very important clue to a child's current behavior. Also remember that every child, whether adopted or not, goes through normal periods of disequilibrium that can last for hours, days, or months. A child going through puberty or early adolescence would be an example of that.

7. It is vitally important that your child have a full blood work-up in consultation with your pediatrician, because the medical information given to the placing agency and the adoptive family can be incorrect or incomplete. It is not unusual for a medical problem to go undiagnosed by physicians in these countries just because their diagnostic tools are dated. Rechecking for things like anemia, lead poisoning, intestinal parasites, Hepatitis B, and sexually transmitted diseases, can help families intervene early if there are undetected health problems. An early developmental assessment by a qualified developmental specialist through your school district, or privately, can also give you a more accurate picture of where your child is in relation to age-appropriate developmental markers.

The following is an excellent book that we have recommended for many families. It is available from Amazon.com or at your local bookstore:

- *Holding Time: How to Eliminate Conflict, Temper Tantrums, and Sibling Rivalry and Raise Happy, Loving, Successful Children* by Martha G., M.D. Welch, Mary Ellen Mark

This section about the adjustment period was provided as a review to the information you received throughout the preparation phase of your adoption. As each family's experience with their child is unique, we will only know if you need assistance once you've returned home, if you are in contact with us. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's behavior and how to cope with it, please do not hesitate to call AGCI. It is very common for parents to feel overwhelmed with the many responsibilities and concerns associated with raising a child, so always know that you are not alone if this is what you are feeling!

Some families find that they have issues right off the bat when they are still in Burundi, while other families enjoy a honeymoon period and issues do not arise until several weeks or months after they return home. It is imperative that you reach out to let us know what you are experiencing so that we may be of help to you, no matter when it is.

Your case manager can both be very helpful in calming nerves, allaying fears, and providing suggestions in coping with all sorts of behaviors your child may be demonstrating. We have had parents call from Burundi and be very glad that they did. If contacting AGCI from Burundi, dial 001-503-282-7652. You are not alone in this adoption experience. Your travel coordinator and the staff members here in the U.S. are available for you at any time.

Keep AGCI Informed

POST-ADOPTION REPORTING:

As stated in your adoption contract with AGCI and throughout the dossier paperwork you prepared to complete your adoption, you have been made aware of the importance of post-adoption reports and the timeliness in which they are received. Although we understand that post-adoption reporting is bothersome, it is of utmost importance to the government of Burundi, and plays a heavy role in the lives of all of the children left behind. In order for AGCI to continue to place children in loving homes, we must continue to work together to prepare reports for your family on time, with the required amount of photos, proper authentications, and numbers of copies. Our ability to fulfill these requirements is paramount in the lives of all of the children at the shelter your child came from who still need families. Please do your best to make all appointments with your social worker in plenty of time so that none of your reports are ever late or incomplete. We cannot stress enough how truly important this is.